

TRIBUNE
Scranton, Pennsylvania
November 28, 1959

Here We Go Again

We seem to be in for another round of debate on the highly controversial question of the relationship between cigarette smoking and lung cancer. "...

The revival is spurred by announced findings of Dr. Leroy E. Burney, Surgeon General of the Public Health Service. Writing in the Journal of the American Medical Association, Dr. Burney declared that the weight of evidence at present implicates smoking as the principal cause of the increased incidence of lung cancer. And he said, further, that filter tips have not been found effective in "materially reducing or eliminating the hazard of lung cancer."

Immediately upon the release of Dr. Burney's views there came protests and denials from organizations affiliated with the tobacco industry.

James P. Richards, president of the Tobacco Institute, termed the Burney findings to be "extreme and unwarranted conclusions." He charged the doctor with ignoring the balanced evidence reviewed in his own scientific paper and "summar-

izing his opinions with so little regard for that evidence, he has performed a real disservice . . ."

And Dr. C. C. Little, scientific director of the Tobacco Industry Research Committee, which makes grants for independent medical research, said:

"Today, more than ever before, scientific evidence is accumulating that conflicts with or fails to support the tobacco smoking theories of lung cancer. Many of these have been omitted from or glossed over in the Public Health Service article and press release."

Dr. Little, among other things, pointed out that new evidence finds that people described as the world's heaviest cigarette smokers have low lung cancer death rates compared with people who smoke less but have been long exposed to urban air pollution.

If these conflicting views are confusing to the average layman he need not fret too much over that fact for they are equally confusing to the average medical man, too.

ENQUIRER-NEWS
Battle Creek, Michigan
November 30, 1959

Another Government 'Scare'

Another segment of American industry is in an uproar over a government agency's warning against its product—this time, cigarettes. In light of "proof" offered by the U. S. Surgeon General, Leroy E. Burney, the tobacco companies seem to be well justified in their complaints.

Burney uses rather vague terms to support his suggestion that "unless the use of tobacco can be made safe, the individual's risk of lung cancer can be reduced best" by giving up smoking. This warning is based on Burney's statement that "evidence implicates" smoking as the "principal" cause of the nation's increase in lung cancer.

As a result of Burney's warning, tobacco company stocks took a beating in the market last Friday. The companies have attacked the surgeon general's claims and, in general, another "cranberry crisis" has been precipitated.

In effect, Burney has added nothing new to warnings from doctors and research laboratories. The possibility that smoking may cause lung cancer has been expounded for years. But, the surgeon general has spoken for government in the matter, lending great weight to the reports of private medical research.

The head of the U. S. Public Health Service may be correct in his statements. We are not taking issue on that score. But, we are vitally concerned with the manner in which the warning was issued.

Burney did not say unequivocally

that smoking causes cancer. He only said that "evidence implicates" tobacco. It was a similarly worded statement that touched off the cranberry scare. Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Flemming warned that a chemical used on portions of this year's cranberry crop had caused cancer in rats. He admitted that it was not known whether it would affect humans in the same way. His announcement, however, damaged the cranberry industry to a great degree.

The government has a responsibility to protect the people at all times. It has an equal obligation to safeguard industry and business. It has performed this function successfully many times in the past. One must observe, however, that in the cranberry case and in the tobacco warning, government really has done nothing but create confusion among both the public and business.

Any government statement that may frighten the people or have an adverse effect on industry should not be issued until clear-cut facts can be offered. It should not be couched in vague terms or in such phraseology as "evidence implicates." Smoking either contributes to lung cancer, or it doesn't. So far, unassailable proof has not been offered. But, by the issuance of Burney's statement, damage has been done to a large segment of American industry.

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